

Remarks/Arguments

By this Amendment, Claim 1 has been revised in view of the Examiner's comments attached to the Advisory Action of October 28, 2003. In particular, Claim 1 has been revised to clarify that the attenuation means of the invention only partially reduces the ion flux, whereby sufficient ions are still available to selectively remove the passivation layer during the etch step of each cycle. Further, claim 1 has been revised to include a means for accelerating the available ions onto the substrate.

The Examiner's comment regarding process limitations is understood. However, the present claims are drafted in "means-plus-function" format, meaning the structural features of the disclosure are incorporated into the claims. The disclosure of the present application includes structurally distinct components for partially reducing ion flux and for accelerating available ions onto the substrate.

For the reasons stated above, and for the reasons already of record, Applicants contend that the amended claim 1, and the claims dependent thereon, define over the cited references.

Respectfully submitted,

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